# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #0422TX-2 for Houston Independent School District

## A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)** | 10 | 7 |

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD's project titled "Houston's 21st Century Teaching and Learning Revolution" is designed to build a comprehensive program in 47 schools with a focus on STEM related fields. The application builds on the Houston Innovative Learning Zone (HiLZ) project that is located in six Houston High Schools, and provides students an opportunity to earn an associate's degree in a high demand workforce field.

While the applicant articulates an excellent vision for high school students, the expressed vision does not offer a clear approach to the acceleration of student achievement and the deepening of student learning in grades PK - 8. The vision does cite a 2003 study by Burke and Grosverner about the educational perceptions of children, but limits the vision for younger students to a single statement of "a personalized approach to education that focuses on individual needs and uses technology in an innovative way."

This section was scored in the mid range because of the lack of a clear approach to the acceleration of student achievement and the deepening of student learning in grades PK-8.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)** | 10 | 8 |

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD school distsrict established an Innovation Zone in response to requests frm students and the community at large to transform the Career and Technology programs in the HILZ's schools. The HILZ's elementary and middle feeder schools have been chosen as participants in the grant application because of free and reduced lunch data.

The HISD lists the schools that will paraticipate in grant activities by feeder high, middle, and elementary schools. Included in the applicants approach to implementation is the total number of participating students - 31,166, participating students from low-income families - 28,717, participating students who are high-need - 21,189. However, HISD does not include the total number of participating educators in the project as required.

The selection of the HILZ's schools will support high quality implementation if the grant application is funded.

This section was scored in the low-high range because of the absence of the total number of participating educators in the project as required.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)** | 10 | 7 |

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD indicates their desire to "scale up" the RTT-D grant proposal, if funded, to support a district-wide change process by building on a framework of five district core initiatives adopted by the HISD's Board of Education in 2010. This Strategic Direction for the district includes: a). Effective teachers in every classroom, b). Effective teachers in every school, c). Rigorous instructional standards and supports, d). Data-driven accountability, e). A culture of trust through action.

The HISD's application builds on these five district core initiatives by a). increasing the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals, b). providing equity and opportunity for all students, c). raising the bar, d). promoting innovation and

continuous improvement.

The plan to increase the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals is researched based and is focused on four key strategies for teachers and five key strategies for principals. It is unclear whether the strategy to establish a "rigorous and fair teacher appraisal system" is currently underway in the District, or will be accomplished if the RTT-D grant application is funded.

HISD's plan to provide equity and opportunity for all students specifies "support" for all students and "equity of resources for students by removing barriers," and characterizes these two foci as an "accountability" system. Specificity about "support" and "removal of barriers" should have been included. This part of the plan is insufficient

HISD's plan to raise the bar includes a comprehensive online K-12 curriculum aligned with Texas standards for math, engineering, and literacy, the support of school choice, and providing a rigorous curriculum and college- readiness course work. These three initiatives are worthy but more specificity is needed as is specifying a more succinct connection between the grant application and "raising the bar".

The plan, as described in section A - 3, provides excellent goals and activities for the translation of the reform initiative to meaningful district-wide change. However, the rationale for the initative lacks necessary specificity.

This section was scored in the high-mid range because of the lack of specificity for the rationale.

| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
| --- | --- | --- |

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD's has established ambitious and achievable annual goals in the following areas. The Guiding Principles and Drivers for Reform located in Appendix (A)(4)-1 provides the necessary philosophical underpinnings for achieving ambitious goals.

Those areas that include ambitious yet achievable goals include:

- Performance on summative assessments as measured by the STARR
- Decreasing achievement gaps as measured by grade level scores on the STARR in reading, math, and science disaggregated by sub-group
- Postsecondary degree attainment as measured by the percentage of Houston graduates with a post-secondary degree within 6 years of graduation from high school.

The areas that do not include ambitious yet achievable goals include:

- In each year of the project at least 80% of the participating students will be promoted on time to the next grade level. 80% is not an ambitious goal.g
- College Enrollment is measure by the ratio between college-enrolled students and their graduating cohort. The goal of special education students to increase from a 5% graduation rate in 2012-2013 to 13% in 2016-2017 is not ambitious.

This section was scored in the mi range because the established goals for graduation of special education students and the goal for the percentage of students to be promoted from one grade level to the next are not ambitious.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

| | Available | Score |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)** | 15 | 12 |

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD's success the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement is substantial, except in the category; of college enrollment. The success of advancing student learning and achievement is evidenced by being named a finalist for the 2012 Broad Prize. Data provided in the application provides clear evidence of:

a). Improved student learning outcomes and the closing of achievement gaps

- White / Hispanic / African American graduation rates in 2008 respectively: 82%, 61%, and 67%, by 2011 graduation rates were 85%, 78%, and 79%.
- The gap in graduation rates between the general student population and students with disabilities narrowed.
- Drop out rates for all students 2008-2011 declined from approximately 18% to 11%,
- Drop our rates for special education students 2008-2011 dropped from approximately 28% to 18%.
- Because the drop out rates in 2010 and 2011 were relatively the same the challenge for the HISD is to again achieve a reduction in the drop out rates in 2012 and beyond.
- College enrollment in the HISD increased by 412 students from 2010 to 2011. Considering the Houston school district is the fourth largest school district in the nation this number is incredibly low.
- HISD does provide evidence of "increasing equity in teaching and learning" , i.e. investments in improving teacher effectiveness. In addition, the District developed a summer program for students not yet proficient as determined by  the STAAR assessments, and hired the most effective teachers in the District paying them bonuses based on the number of students reaching proficiency.

Because the focus of the RTT-D grant application is  the HiLZ schools, it would have strengthened the application to include achievement, graduation rates, drop out rates, and college enrollment rates for the HilZ schools in the narrative rather than in the appendix.

b). Achieving Reforms in Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools is well documented and evidenced by the following:

- Adoption of the Apollo 20 program - provides additional funding per pupil for schools in the program.
- Providing a longer school year, longer days, and intensive tutoring are successful initiatives

c). The HISD is currently doing a good job of providing performance data to students, parents, and educators and is in the process in developing systems to provide student performance data to improve instruction and provide additional services. Evidence includes:

- A district - wide data warehouse
- A Data Dashboard for teachers - including formative assessments data.
- A Data Dashboard for the public

This section was scored in the low-high range because of the lack of district success over the past four years in HISD students enrolling in college.

| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Per RTT-D grant requirements, the HISD does provide a high level of transparency for actual salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only, actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only, and actual non-personnel expenditures at the school school.  The transparency of current of school-level expenditures from State and Local funds is evidenced by:

- The HISD website which contains the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report,the complete annual HISD budget, and information explaining bond proposals.
- The HISD prepares a detailed budget book that includes each campus and their budget funds,.

This section was scored in the high range because all required components were completed and documented a high level of transparency.

| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments:

- The HISD has the latitude to begin their school year prior to statewide requirements
- The HISD may exceed the state required school day length if desired.

- The HISD may award student course credits based on mastery
- The HISD is required to offer individualized instructional programs, and graduation credit for distance learning and correspondence courses.
- The state of Texas offers mechanisms to LEA's to award credit with variable amounts of instructional contact.
- The state of Texas requires principals to develop and administer personal graduation plans for each student.
- The state of Texas provides parents the right to request early graduation from high school.
- The HISD has the already developed a teacher appraisal process in lieu of the statewide process.

This section was scored in the high range because of the evidence presented.

| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has demonstrated a signficant effort to engage stakeholders in the RTT-D grant development process by conducting face-to-face meeetings with all stakeholdeer groups. As a result of this participation by stakeholder groups refinements were made in the grant proposal and the District ultimately received the support of families, teachers, prinicpals, higher education, the business community and other local community-based organizations.

The stakeholder engagement process used by the HISD does have one limitation to be noted. While the application states that "families and students had an opportunity to learn about and provide input regarding the proposal", that input was conducted with PTA groups and site-based decision making committees. The HISD does not specifically state students are members of the PTA's and the SDMC's. If so, the input provided by students was not delineated in the application.

The District also has provided evidence of support for the project from the Houston Federation of Teachers, and has received support from, at minimum, 70% of teachers in all buildings identified to participate project if funded.

This section was scored in the low-high range because of the lack of identified student participation in the stakeholder engagement process.

| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD provides an excellent review of the identified needs and gaps the grant proposal will address, but does not provide suffcent rationale for the activities the District will undertake to implement personalized learning envirnoments, if funded.

- Data analyzed by the HISD to determine needs and gaps include census data, student test data, and student, teacher, and parent surveys. The District also explains in the needs and gaps section the use of the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards and the the expansion of the HiLZ. This section is very unclear as to how the district used this information to assess their current status in their ability to implement personalized learning communities.
- Gaps in Student Performance: Student performance data of the HISD shows that African-American, Hispanic students, and students with disabilities do not perform at the same level as their peers in other sub-groups. The HISD states the District will dramatically reduce these gaps. The application, however, does not define the word dramatically.
- Gaps in Professional Capacities - related to personalize learning: The HISD states personalized learning offers learners a voice and choice that will lead to teacher and student as co-designers and to teachers as facilitators of learning. Further, the District states they will use a "one-to-one learning environment" using a Universal Design for Learning. It appears that the District is now defining Personalized Learning as One-to-One Learning. If that is not the intent additional clarifying information should have been included.
- Gaps in Personnel and Technology Resources to Support the Proposal - Gaps in advisory/advisee programs, access to data, and student access to technology were succinctly stated. The current ratio of students to technology devices in the HISD is 7:1.

This section was scored in the low-high range because of the lack of specficity aobut the use of one-to-one learning in their reform process for personalized learning.

# C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(1) Learning (20 points)** | 20 | 20 |

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has crafted a comprehensive and achievable plan to engage and emower all learners, especially high-need students, so students will graduate from the HISD  college and career-ready.   There is excellent specificity in the plan as to how the HILS schools will serve as a model replicable accross the district.

Key components articulated by the District to establish support of parents and educators for all students include

- the implementation of the Renzulli Learning system to create assessments for students
- the development of a Personal Graduation Plan for students in grades 6-12,
- teachers serving as advisors to work individually with students and parents
- teacher access to an electronic dashboard of student achievement data
- high school students will have access to College Access Coordinators upon entry into a career pathway
- student involvement  in deep learning experiences in areas of their academic interest.  Key initatives include
-    *A competency based curriculum design supported by a technology environment of one child per four devices or BYOD.
-     *Project based learning
- strategically incorporate the multi-cultural environment in the City of Houston by the use of digital tools which will allow students to access and be exposed to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives.
- Ithe District will assist students with the mastery of critical academic content and develop skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, critical thinking by the use of project based learning.
- Community stakeholders will be utilized in the design and assessment of the project based learning activities.


There is an excellent strategy crafted by the HISD to ensure each student, with the support of parents and educators,to ensure that each student has access to:

- a personalized  sequence of instructional content, a variety of high-qualtiy instructional approaches and environments, high quality content, including digital learning content, ongoing and regular feedback, accommodations, and high-quality strategies for high-need students.
- Data accessed digitally of on-going assessment data for each student
- Instructional  approaches which include blended learning environments, on-line courses,  and flipped classrooms.
- The incorporation of Teacher Development Specialists to assist teachers and principals as they design and evaluate learner engagement and ultimately student achievement.
- HISD currently has in place a competency based curriculum which will be combined with the Texas College and Career Ready Standards
- Digital tools will assist with personalized learning through a gradual release of responsibility model.
- Computer-based and the personalized learning system will be used to assist schools with the transition to blended learning which will allow teachers to provide differentiation and accommodations for high need students.

The District also has an articulated plan to provide training and support to students to ensure they understand how to use tools and resources to track and manage their learning as evidenced by:

- Training and support for techers
- Teacher advisors will be used to ensure students track and manage their learning
- College Access Coordinators will be used to train students.

This section was scored in the high range because the plan specifies developing a personalized learning environment with goals,activities to undertaken, and excelelnt rationale for all activitieds so students of the HISD wll graduate college and career ready,

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)** | 20 | 20 |

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has articulated a convincing plan to help educators improve instruction and increase their capacity as they support student progress toward meeting college and career-ready standards.  Personalized teaching

and learning for all students will be accomplished by all participating educators participating in training and professional teams, will have access to tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress,  participating school leaders and school leadership teams will have sufficient training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment, and there is a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers.

A). Personalized teaching and learning for all students will be accomplished by all participating educators participating in training and professional teams, will have access to tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress.

School based professional learning communities, summer institutes, and school based coaching and mentoring are the cornerstone for the District to train  participating teachers on how to work effectively in professional teams.

- Moving from a traditional teacher-centered model to a learner driven model is a significant change and the District will  provide  leadership for this change by extensive professional development delivered by Instructional Design Specialists, Teacher Development Specialists, and building principals.  Teachers at the HILZ schools will receive "intensive support to improve instructional practice."   The District does not specify what intensive support will be provided to the HILZ schools.
-   Another key component of the plan is the adaptation of content and instruction which  will be accomplished by the use of graduation coaches to help students "catch up", students will participate in common performance tasks that allow choice and differentiation, and at the HILZ schools a "scaffold" approach to STEM beginning in elementary school will be used.   Again, the District does not provide an explanation of what this approach includes for the HILZs schools and how it is to be implemented.
- The district will train teachers to design and implement multi-dimensional assessments that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.  "Assessment for learning"  will be the key assessment initiative to be used by teachers to modify and differentiate teaching and learning.
- The last component of the plan to engage participating educators in training and professional teams is to improve the professional practice of teachers and principals by the use of evaluation systems.  The teacher evaluation plan does include student performance, instructional practice, and professional expectations components.     The District does intend to support the HILZ feeder system in instructional leadership through the McREL Balanced Leadership Framework but does not explain what will be involved in that support.

B). Teachers of the HISD will have the tools tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

- Professional development will be provided to all teachers to support students as they move through a competency-based curriculum.
- Teachers will meet as professional learning teams to analyze formative assessment data.  This data will be used to monitor student performance and as an accountability measurement for leadership.
- An online assessment system with an item bank is in place and a district benchmark assessment.
- The online Parent Student Connect System is in place to allow parents and students to communicate with teachers and view class assignments.
- Personal Graduation Plans track state assessments.


C). The HISD ensures that all participating school leaders and school leadership teams  have training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs and accelerates student progress.

- The management tool PeopleSoft allows principals to correlate student performance with teacher performance.
- Administrator training has been conducted in the teacher appraisal process.
- The District uses the ASPIRE Award program to financially reward teachers and administrators whose work led to increased student achievement.

The District is commended for eliminating large group, one-size-fits all professional development

D). The HISD  has an convincing plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals  including in hard-to-staff schools.  That plan includes:

- A teacher evaluation program that is a Value Added Model and has resulted in a signifcant number of low performing teachers being exited from the District.
- A Career Pathways program set to be launched in 2012 - 2013 that will recognize and retain high performing teachers and expanding their responsibilities, training, and compensation.

This section was scored in the high range because the goals, activities, and stated rationale for the activiies were comprehenisve and evidence-based.

# D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)** | 15 | 15 |

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has successfully demonstrated the goals, activities and activity rational to include sufficient practices, policies, and rules are in place that will facilitate personalized learning for students.

An appropriate LEA central office support structure is in place evidence by:

- Central office leadership staff has documented responsibility for the main components of the proposal, monitor progress, and serve as coaches for school administrators to ensure goals of the reform proposal are accomplished.
- District departments that will support the proposal to integrate personalized learning in the HISD include College and Career Readiness, Technology, Grants, Research and Accountability, Accounting/Budgeting, and Legal.

The 47 project schools will be initiating the personalized learning environments and will be afforded the necessasary flexibity and accountabilit in scheduling, staffing, roles and responsibiltiies necessary to be successful.

There is sufficient evidence to conclude student credit will be based on mastery

- Student access to individual advising and technology-enabled individualized planning to identify and plan their learning needs and goals.
- Current HISD initiatives include the APEX courses, and their iis evidence that use of digital curriculums to provide credit to students based on mastery will be expanded.

There is sufficient evidence to conclude students will have oppportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards

- Authentic asseessmentss to demonstrate mastery of standards will be used, i.e. capstone projects, performance tasks, etc.
- A new learning management system will be installed.

There is suffcent evidence to conclude there will be accessbile resources and instructional practices

- Teachers in project schools will use Universal Design for Learning tools in instructional design
- IEP's and Personalized Graduation Plans will be implented for all special needs and ELL students.

This section is scored in the high range because LEA practices, policies,and rules are currently in place,or will be implemented if funded, to ensure the successful implementation of the proposed system of personalized learning.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)** | 10 | 10 |

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has an excellent array of electronic infrastructure supports in place to assist in the implementation of personalized learning. The evidence provided by the District includes:

Access for all participants

- Current in school and out of school access to support implementation include initiatives such as Twilight campuses, Project share, Community-based computer labs, and Parent super centers.
- Implementation of a learning management system will provide 24-7 digital access.

Appropriate levels of technical support

- Teacher advisors meet with students one-on-oneto ensure students know how to use the technical support
- Professional development for teachers will include use of hardware and software to support instruction
- Professional development is under development for both face-to-face and online turorials for teachers about "flipped" classroopms.
- Online  tutorials for parents and teachers focused on use of technology are being developed


Information technology systems that allow parents and students to export information

- HISD uses the Chancery Student Management System
- EdPlan, a web-based system that allows educators to monitor student performance and manage data to support results-driven instruction, is currently being implemented.
- A Data Warehouse is currently under construction that consolidates information from all student software systems.


Ensuring use of interoperable data systems

- The Chancery SMS interfaces nightly with the EasyIEP system to allow special education evaluators access to real time data relevant to student referals.
- The Peformance-Based Monitoring and Analysis System is used to report annually on the performance of students in Bilingual, ESL, and CTE programs.
- Three digital dashboards have been developed - one for teachers, one for principals, and one for the public

This section is scored in the high range because all components required in the application have been addressed.


# E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)** | 15 | 15 |

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**


The HISD has committed to using the Baldridge continuous improvement cycle of Plan, Do, Study, Act at both the District and School level as their continuous improvement process.  The plan is both clear and of high-quality.

At the District Level

- The Executive Steering Committee will be responsible for the development of the project plan and appropriate resources.
- Four Workstream committees will be established one for each major component of the project:  communications, professional development and curriculum, technology, and continuous improvement/change management process.
- The work of the Executive Committee and the Workstream committees will focus on sustainability, systems/process change, business process improvement, and improvements in teaching and learning.

At the School Level

- Shared Decision Making Committees and principals will lead the Baldrige process
- At the HiLZ schools  a business/higher education advisory group will assist with the continuous improvement process.

The HISD has also included an excellent strategy to monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District

 The Executive Steering Committee will assume over-all responsibility for the above by:

- Surveys and focus groups
- Feedback of teachers and principals on the impact of professional development and technology
- Specific to the HiLZ's schools will be the a series of annual community meetings to ensure the district receives appropriate feedback from that constituency

- Contract for an external review

This section is scored in the high range because the plan is of high quality and has the necessary flexibility to make adjustments in the plan as necessary.

| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
|---|---|---|

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has documented a thorough process to communciate with internal and external stakeholders if their application is funded.   The plan will be developed in partnership with school leaders and key stakeholders.  The HISD has articulated four strategic goals for the communication plan, a). build understanding of the importance of STEM educaiotn and preparing students for college and careers, b). cultivate commitment, engagement and advocay for all students, c).communicate honestly in ways to recognize excellence and foster transparency, d). promote the lessons learned and results to the broader Houston community.   In addition, the HISD has established 14 strategies to accomplish the stated goals.

The score of this section is in the high range because of a method to establish an outstanding communications plan based on four stated goals.

| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
|---|---|---|

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has established ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required performance measures.

The District has established an excellent rationale for using the measures as indicated below:

- Stanford will be used as a norm-referenced measure to provide a comparison of student performance with a nationally represented sample.
- STAAR, the new Texas state test, will be us to assess student achievement and knowledge of the TEKS curriculum in grades 3-8
- End of course assessments will be used at the high school level to assess growth of students when compared to other students in the district as well as the state.
- Attendance will be used as a measure of age appropriate health and social-emotional indicators by grade level.
- Completed FAFSA applications will be used as a measure of student intent to attend college.
- SAT scores will be used to determine college readiness.
- Enrollment in sequence of courses in CRE and Tech Prep  will be used to measure students connections to career pathways.
- Attendance will be used as  a measure for age appropriate health and social-emotional lindicators at all grade levels

 How the  HISD will  provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan  is insufficient, as is the proposed plan to review and improve measures over time if proven to be insufficient to determine implementation progress.

- Articulaed measures above will be used to mesures to optimize student success, ehance counselor productivity, and track results is not a specific plan  .
- Stating that Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests will be used to determine if different supports are needed for students and will be reviewed annually to determine success of implementaton again does not provide the specificity necessary to be considered a high-quality plan.

This section is scored in the mid range because of a lack of specificity in regard to proposed " review and improvement of measures" if proven to be insufficient.

| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
|---|---|---|

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD plan to evaluate the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities is appropriate and achieveable.  All required components are included in the plan.  Specifically the District will contract an external evaluator to lead the projection

evaluation and will work in partnership with the Program Director and Program manager to implement the evelution plan using both qualitative and quantitative measures.

This section of the plan is scored in the high range because of a succicnt and high-quality plant to montior and continuously improve the plan

# F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)** | 10 | 5 |

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD's budget, including the budget narrative and tables, clearly identifies all funds that will support the project and are reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal.

The District, however, does not  clearly provide a rationale for investments and priorities.

- The Distinct does not include identification of funding from any other funding sources, i.e. state or federal, to be used in support of implementing the proposal.
- The District doe not identify funds that will be used for one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs.
- These is no budget narrative that identifies strategies to ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments established.

This section is scored in the mid range because the budget narrative does not include all required  components.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)** | 10 | 0 |

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

This section is scored in the low range becuase there is not sustainability of project goals included in the HISD's application.

# Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)** | 10 | 10 |

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD has crafted an excellent proposal to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students with  highest priority to students in participating schools with high-need students.

1. The HISD has described a coherent and sustainable partnership that it has formed with public or private organizations evidenced by:

- Delivering key academic supports and workforce  connections with Houston Community College  Rice University, and Exxon, and the Texas Medial Center to provide externship and internships for students.
- Boosting parent engagement - Greater Houston Partnership and Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston
- Providing health and mental health supports - Children's Defense Fund, Communities in Schools of Houston, Family Services of Greater Houston
- Meeting families' social service and basic needs - Houston Food Band Texas/United Way Helpline and a myriad of other partners committed to support the District's grant application.

The HISD has identified not more than 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA

- Identified results do include both educational results and other education outcomes.

The HISD has provided an excellent description of how the partnership would:

   a). Track selected indicators - Use of external evaluator with expertise in evaluating USED projects will be used to establish both formative and summative assessments working in partnership with the HISD Research and Accountability Department.

   b). Target resources based on data - District-created benchmarks will be reviewed and analyzed by the evaluator, curriculum staff, and campus leadership teams to determine growth and mastery of objectives.  The data analyzed will be used to inform instruction.

   c). Scaling Strategy - The HISD seek to expand the HILZ concept and GO Centers, parent engagement, and ongoing professional development for teachers on college and career standards.  However, there is no strategy to accomplish the expansion of these initiative articulated in the application.

   d). Improving Results - The HISD has developed metrics to gage progress of the proposed project.  The District does have a broad-based coalition that is supportive of the initiative that will transform the HISD.

The HISD provides an thoughtful description of how the partnership would, within participating schools, integrate education and other services

- The District will build on their current infrastructure and use the result so a district-wide assessment will provide a continuum of services.
- Services provided will include food and nutrition, family education supports, mentoring and youth services, and mental, physical, and emotional services.
- A continuum of wrap-around services will be provided.

 Public and private partnerships will be used by the HISD to build the capacity of staff in participating schools.  The HISD is commended for acknowledging current challenges in this regard.

- HISD acknowledges they have some challenges with their work to assess the needs and assets of students.  Moreover, training is not consistently intensive.  The District has identified how they are working to over-come these challenges.
- An inventory of the assess of the school and community that are aligned with project goals is stated.  Specifically, those assets include a performance-based evaluation system, data warehouse, schools dashboards, Twilight campuses school-based computer labs and parent super centers.
- The Deming Cycle of Plan, Do, Check, Act will be used to monitor, measure, and improve the quality of teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.
- A comprehensive communications plan developed by the HISD Office of Communication will engage parents and families of participating students.  Goals for the plan are stated in the application.
- Two processes will be used to routinely assess the district's progress- 1). contracting with an external evaluator and implementing the Deming Cycle of Plan, Do, Check, Act

 The HISD has identified annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures as evidence by:

- Five ambitious goals for all participating students and families are stated in the application: Increase student attendance rates, increase the percentage of families receiving referrals, increase the number of community organizations providing services to participants , increase the number of community organizations that provide services to participants that provide services to increase the high school preadaptation rate, increase the number of community organizations that provide services to participants that contribute to increasing the percentage of all students that graduate college and career ready.

This section is scored in the high range because the HISD has written a convincing proposal to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources.

# Absolute Priority 1

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Absolute Priority 1** | Met/Not Met | Met |

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The HISD's plan to revolutionize teaching and learning titled, ***Houston's 21st Century Teaching and Learning Revolution***, has met the USDE absolute priority 1 of established a personalize learning environment. Changing the teaching / learning nexus is not easy and the HISD has proposed an aggressive plan that will undoubtedly reduce achievement gaps and increase the rate at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **210** | **174** |

## Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points) | 15 | 15 |

**Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:**

In partnership with the nonprofit organization Collaborative for Children, the HISD has developed a clear, though not innovative, solution to improve the learning environments at child care centers serving children from low-income and minority families.

The Bridge to Bright Future proposal has identified the population of students to be served:

- Feeder programs to schools in the HiLZ's program
- Financial need of the students and the existing programs capacity to change.

Activities that would be co-developed include:

- Literacy - teachers will participate in two online literacy trainings per year and teachers of 3 and 4 year olds will participate n in-person literacy/language trainings per year. The literacy component is assed on the Collaborative for Children's Loving Literacy for Life Program
- STEM - Early childhood teachers will participate in two online, STEM based courses. In addition teachers of 3 and 4 year olds will participate in three, four hour in-person trainings.
- Individualized Learning - The training structure for teachers is the same as in the literacy and STEM components. In addition, identified pre-schools will receive one IBM Young Explorer computer module.

There is not evidence in the application to indicate the specified program will be implemented across two or more LEA's.

The proposed budget is adequate to support the development and implementation of activities.

- Sufficient funding is allocated for teacher training, both on-line and in-person
- Sufficient funding is available for the HIPPY coordinators
- Training for parents and daycare works is adequately funded.
- The optional budget supplement is scored in the low-high range because of a lack of innovation in the proposal. Primarily, the project, as described focuses on training in the areas of literacy STEM and individualized learning. Providing this type of training is certainly not innovative.

# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

**Application #0422TX-3 for Houston Independent School District**

## A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)** | 10 | 8 |

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The vision addresses two of the criteria (increasing equity & student academic interests):

A. The applicant has indicated in the report that they hope increase equity by ensuring that "a consistent and rigorous education" will be offered to all students including those with disabilities, English language learners, homeless, migrant and delinquent students by removing barriers that would result in limited resources available to high poverty communities but the applicant did not indicate specifically how they would do that.

B. The applicant has indicated in the report that they will continue to provide school choice to students and at the same time, broaden innovation at local schools to help expand options to the students. The applicant has indicated that by providing dual credits through AP, 1B or accelerated coursework, this will enable the students to have more educational choices thus leading to increased student engagement.

Despite comprehensive and what appears to be coherent reform vision, there are some minor details such as limited discussion on accelerating student achivement other than offering accelerated coursework and broadening educational options, the applicant has nevertheless presented a vision that can support district-wide school reforms through focus on STEM education and Strategic Direction. For that reason, the applicant has been granted 8 out of 10 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)** | 10 | 6 |

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The report reveals the process the applicant will undertake to identify schools to participate in the project and the majority of the students in the participating schools (47 schools) receive free or reduced lunches and all but one participating schools are what the district label, feeder schools - meaning those schools will "feed" into high schools that participate in another Houston Independent School District program - Houston Innovation Learner Zone (HiLZ). From reviewing the report, it is indicated that the criteria for identifying participating students are: (1) schools that feed into HiLZ programs & (2) students receiving free or reduced lunches. What is unclear is why is it critical to establish "feeder" schools as one of the criteria. What is also unclear is how many schools participate in HiLZ and how many other schools are not participating in the HiLZ program and whether there are high poverty or at-risk students at those non-participating schools. Based on that reasoning, the applicant will receive 6 out of 10 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)** | 10 | 4 |

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has presented a plan (Five-Core Initative) and a strong foundation (performance-based evaluation & compensation system, Career and College Readiness Standards, data warehouse, an innovative initiative & strong commitment from district leadership) but lacks details in each core initiative. There are not much details in the area of Data-Driven Accountability and Culture of Trust through Action. The applicant hinted at data-driven accountability here and there through narrative in different parts of the section: **Houston's Plan to Provide Equity and Opportunity for All Students** (a consistent and rigorous education will be offered in a safe learning environment with use of data and accountabiity to inform all decisions) but that would be the extent of the narrative on the Data-Driven Accountability. The applicant makes assumptions that Culture of Trust through Action can be achieved by plans to raise the bar, promote innovation and continuous improvement but there's no detailed plan to address Culture of Trust through Action specifically.

Additionally, the applicant didn't present a plan to scale up the project to serve the remaining students in the district. According to the report, the plan is to "increase the performance of its 200,000-plus students" but there were never any details in regard to this plan. Specifically, there wasn't any discussion on how to scale up the project to serve other schools that did

not initially participate in the project or at least there was no mention of it in the section.

As stated, the district has presented a plan but it is not necessarily a high quality plan especially when there are some details missing from the plan. There are far too many core initiatives that do not possess sufficient details for the initiatives to be presented as a high quality plan. For that reason, the applicant's plan earns 4 out of 10 points.

| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 7 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has presented a comprehensive plan to address student learning and performance & increased equity in the report. The applicant has also presented appendices of documents including guiding principles and drivers of reform and a clearly outlined set of goals and objectives to improve student performance but some of the goals and objectives are questionable. The activities as outlined in the proposal will not necessarily net desired results as suggested in the proposal, i.e., 1.) having at least 80% of teachers with lesson plans that incorporate STEM strategies does not automatically lead to increased student performance & 2.) having 80% of parents participate in informational sessions regarding college admissions processes, financial aid, admissions criteria, post-secondary degree options and institutional expectations does not automatically lead to increased enrollment in post-secondary education.

The goals for student performance on summative assessments present a very thorough picture of what the district wants to achieve by the end of the project cycle but some numbers may not be entirely realistic. For instance, currently, the baseline for HiLZ Cohort Grade 3 shows 56.2% of students attaining passing scores on STAAR Math assessment and it is expected that by the end of 2012-13, at least 70% of the students in HiLZ Cohort Grade 3 will achieve that. The goal is certainly ambitious but to expect the students in the cohort to achieve the same score (70%) as well as for other students in the district (referring to target score of 70% at the end of SY 2012-13 for all other 3rd graders in the district) meaning the other students would have to improve from the current baseline of 62% to 70% at the of SY 2012-13 thus representing 8% of growth while the project expects 13.8% of growth for the students in the cohort can be daunting thus unrealistic. Another instance of unrealistic goals would be looking at decreasing achievement gap between two target populations (Asian students and Special Education students) on page 23 where the current baseline shows 97% achievement rate for Asians on Algebra 1 and 51.3% achievement rate for Special Education students on Algebra 1. To expect no gap between both target populations by the end of project cycle would be ambitious and probably unattainable. For two other goals (3) graduation rates & (4) college enrollment, the goals appear to be ambitious but very realistic.

While the application is laudable, it does not necessarily present goals and objectives that are entirely relevant to the project goals. Additionally, the goals for improving student performance and decreasing achievement gaps across the board are very thorough but not entirely realistic in some areas. For the section, the applicant receives 7 out of 10 points.

# B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)** | 15 | 11 |

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

From reviewing the charts, it is evident that HISD has "a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement." Appendices reveal that HISD has been able to consistently raise student performance across the board and decrease dropout rate across the board as well over the past four years. For instance, White, Hispanic and African American students have improved graduation rates from 82%, 61% and 67% respectively to 85%, 78% and 79% respectively over four year period. SAT and ACT scores have improved as well over the past four years as evidenced in the letter composed by Superintendent Terry Grier.

Specifically, the achievement gap in the area of graduation rate has closed considerably for White and African-American students from 15% in 2008 to 6% in 2011 and that would be an improvement in the area of achievement gap. The only concern with this assessment is there's no data on students with disabilities. For other aspects of the report to include students with disabilities as a subgroup, it is glaring when their data are not included in this section.

There isn't any evidence to show HISD has produced a clear record of success in the area of school reform. The report indicates that early results have been encouraging but there's no hard evidence to support their claims. The only indication of progress would be commitment HISD has made to two schools identified by Federal definition as persistently low-achieving schools and that they have committed effective principal and teachers, increased instructional time, use of data to drive instruction and decisions, provide additional tutoring services and support a no-excuse culture but that, by no means, is an

evidence of improvement or clear record of success.

There's no clear record of success in the area of making student performance data available to all critical stakeholders. The report reveals that HISD has made effort to establish data warehouse and provide necessary training to better utilize data to drive instruction but the warehouse will be ready by 2013 so for that reason, the assessment is incomplete in this area.

Combined with a clear track record of improving student performance and closing achievement gaps, HISD has indicated that they have exhibited strong commitment to improving student performance but they do not have any solid evidence to show that they have a clear record of school reform and making student performance data accessible. For that reason, the applicant has received a score of 7 out of 15 points.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)** | **5** | **2** |

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has shared a little about their efforts to become more transparent except to say that they do post "important" financial and governance information on their website. The report also indicates that they do have "detailed budget book" guiding district school principals in making financial decisions relating to hiring personnel to work with students. The applicant indicates that they do publish their data in Academic Excellence Indicator System including reporting number of staff by type and average salary for the type of position.

The applicant explains in the report that they do have a guideline relating to non-personnel expenditures including requiring any purchases of $10,000 or more to be done through competitive proposals.

Finally, HISD does publish agendas for all board meetings including other types of resources can be found online.

The report shows that HISD does take transparency very serious and does post information but it is unclear what would be defined as "important" financial and governance information. There are not any examples in the report to appendix to help with this assessment therefore the applicant will get 2 out of 5 points.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)** | **10** | **10** |

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The report indicates that HISD has performed due diligence in ensuring that there would be no legal, statutory or regulatory conflicts when implementing its project. Furthermore, the district states in the report that some of the groundwork relating to the proposal has been established, i.e., LEA flexibility, current HISD board policy requiring individualized instructional programs, credit for variable instruction program and pedagogical flexibility. In addition, HISD has been granted the initiative to establish rigorous teacher appraisal system with focus on STEM and literacy. The above evidence provided in the report indicates that the district has the necessary conditions and autonomy to carry out the project.

For that section, the applicant receives 10 out of 10 points.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)** | **10** | **8** |

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has received broad support from various stakeholder groups including teachers, parents and administrators. The report shows local organizations supporting the proposal as well. The only stakeholder group missing from the report is students. The report indicates that the students had "an opportunity to learn about and provide input regarding this proposal." Other than that, the applicant has earned broad support from various groups within the coalition and for that, the applicant receives 8 out of 10 points with the missing points due to lack of input from the students.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)** | **5** | **5** |

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has indicated in the report that they do have a high quality plan to analyze their status in regard to implementing their project of personalized learning environments such as needs analysis, reviewing census data, and using College and Career Readiness Standards to further evaluate the needs of their students and whether the implementation of the vision will feasibly meet their needs or not. The analysis in the report provides an in-depth evaluation of different aspects of the project.

Due to the depth of the report, the applicant receives 5 out of 5 points.

# C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(1) Learning (20 points)** | **20** | **15** |

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The application describes two major areas of focus: components of 21st Century personalized learning & research-based strategies and the applicant states that they will incorporate both the components and the strategies to establish high quality education for low-achieving students.

For the first portion of the section focusing on getting the students to understand that learning is key to success, the applicant has provided a detailed plan including training teachers to work with new softwares (Renzulli Learning) and the students as the students navigate repositories of information so that their navigations will be, in a sense, personalized and will be built on the students' strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, the district has developed a plan to make instruction more accessible to students digitally including 24/7 access to content, digital learning resources, and web portals. Finally, HISD has indicated that they will make efforts to personalize all of their instruction by providing project-based learning opportunities.

For the second portion of the section focusing on ensuring that students have access to personalized learning with support from parents and educators, HISD has presented a plan to provide opportunity to personalize learning by creating personalized sequence of instructional content, varying instructional approaches, and providing high quality content and digital access thus enabling students to personalize their learning experiences. Additionally, the district will establish diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments in the curriculum to better assess their students and the data will be housed in their data warehouses to help both individual students and school officials to monitor and support academic progresses. From that, both the students and the teachers will be able to access peronalized computer-based learning recommendations to help guide their education.

For the third portion of the section focusing on implementing mechanisms to help track and manage students' learning, the district will provide training for "everyone" so that they will be able to access the necessary data, to manage progress and use the data to help with career preparation and college enrollment.

The plan provides an in-depth look at how the district will create a portfolio of personalized learning opportunities to support their students individually but does not include much on how they will include parents which are mentioned in both criteria for high quality plan. Both critera indicate that the plan must include the support of the parents but the plan do not provide specifics on how they plan to do that. For that reason, the applicant receives 15 out of 20 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)** | **20** | **15** |

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has presented a plan that will incorporate different elements to ensure that they are able to implement their vision of improving student performance among low-poverty and at-risk students in the district. The plan includes providing teachers with necessary tools to move from teacher-centered environments to learner-driven models through training and support from district staff. In the application, HISD adds that they will also adapt content and instruction to ensure that HISD can support the transition from teacher-centered approach to learner-driven model and they are able to do that through adding some personnel to better equip their students with necessary knowledge to make educational decisions & adding some personnel such as coaches and specialists to further develop their learner-driven model.

In the area of measuring progress, the district utilize multi-dimensional approach with emphasis on creating opportunities for the students to "demonstrate learning and understanding." This also means the district will be implementing Cornerstone Performance Assessments in all disciplines but with emphasis on math, science and language arts. The additional emphasis placed on math and science aligns well with HISD's high quality plan to emphasize on STEM education. In addition to that, the district has stated that they intend to perform "assessment as learning" as a part of their efforts to assess their student's academic progress. The district has also mentioned that they plan to incorporate observations, conferences, portfolios, projects, performance tasks, essays, homework unit tests and district-level assessments as a part of their multi-dimensional assessments with focus on ensuring that the students receive individualized instruction.

Their high quality plan also includes a plan to strengthen performance-based and value-added appraisal process & provide professional development and training to improve practice in classrooms. Through professional development, the district has a plan to incorporate "Teacher Development Specialists" who will have the responsibility of supporting teachers through meaningful observations, conferencing, and coaching. The purpose behind this approach is to ensure that teachers are better able to select tools to support their personalized instruction.

School leadership teams, according to the report, are expected to raise their professional expectations as well as implement growth-based metrics to better evaluate teachers and better track student performance. The district plans to train their school leaders on how to appraise their teachers and personnel including using growth-based & value-added appraisal systems. The plan also includes details on how the district plans to retain or increase number of highly effective teachers through teacher leadership programs.

The district has included a detailed action plan in the appendix in supplement to their report including information on timelines and deliverables. However for the part regarding Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement, it is uncertain whether the plan will result in increased student achievement. It may not be enough that the district provides training on how to design learning experiences that follow UDL principles. There are another areas that will require training or support but they were not outlined in the plan such as the plan to implement personalized sequence but there's no mention on how teachers will assess that. The plan also does not include discussion on setting up professional development to better utilize and assess use of College and Career Readiness Standards, which appears to be an integral part of the vision as evidenced in earlier part of the report.

Overall, the plan does incorporate many elements that will equip teachers to bettter instruct personalized learning to their students including redesigning their lesson plans to better reflect effective instruction and practices but the action plan does not include sufficient discussion on how to train or prepare teachers to make the transition from teacher-centered approaches to learner-driven models. For the lack of details, the applicant will receive 15 out of 20 points.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)** | 15 | 15 |

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has included in the proposal a high quality plan to address necessary components to support implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure to ensure that the project carried out will be successful. The strength of the high quality plan are merited on reforming LEA central office support structure (5 chief school officers and 25 school support officers) to better govern the schools, providing the school leaders with greater autonomy to make decisions regarding their individual school needs including making personnel decisions and scheduling and day to day decisions as well, and crediting students based on "seat time" as well as providing the necessary structure to allow for demonstrated mastery of subject or content. The demonstrated mastery in the high quality plan includes mutiple opportunities to complete courses through credit recovery, credit acceleration, unit recovery, credit discovery, and exam remediation and preparation. The high quality plan also incorporates a plan to implement Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol to help English language teachers instruct English language learners more effectively.

For that, the applicant will receive 15 out of 15 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)** | 10 | 8 |

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The plan does present a list of resources that are available to all stakeholders through both in and out of school including twilight campuses, online help center, online community, school-based and community-based computer labs and parent centers. Also, the report indicates that the district will provide training to all stakeholders to ensure that they are able to use the resources and tools to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. The training includes online tutorials for parents and teachers so that they will be able to support their students/children. In addition to the resources, the proposal states that they will utilize integrated suite of student success planning and instructional management system to better help educators with developing plans, monitor student performance and manage data to support their efforts to focus on results-driven instruction incluing using some of the new softwares that they have identified for their project. Finally, the proposal includes a plan to make their data systems interoperational to help keep track of each individual student to ensure that they receive personalized instruction and necessary intervention to become academically successful even if the students move around from different schools to other schools. This will inevitably lead to stronger data warehouse including equipping both teachers and principals to learn more about each of teachers and students' performance.

The plan provides an in-depth look at how the district will ensure that the current infrastructure is capable of supporting the efforts within the project to make all resources and data available for parents, teachers, and administrators to maximize their students' success in and out of classrooms. But the plan does not discuss how they will establish interoperable data systems for budget data as outlined in the criteria. Otherwise, the plan responds on how the district plans to meet each criteria and for that depth, the applicant receives 8 out of 10 points.

# E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)** | 15 | 15 |

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has proposed to utilize Baldrige Continuous Improvement system to monitor progress of the project over its life cycle including creating positions to focus on monitoring of the plan, manage project through working with stakeholders to implement the project, creating Workstream Committees to help carry out the whole process of the implementation, monitor and assess project implementation regularly over the life of the project, and carry out the project on both district and school levels. Following the Baldrige model, the proposal will be implemented on school level with focus on plan, do, study and act components of the Baldrige model as well. The proposal offers details on how HISD will implement the project on school level and monitor the progress as well. The monitor plan includes using formative assessment data to ensure that the project is progressing according to their vision, plans and timetables. The proposal also includes a plan to survey and gather feedback to ensure that their Race to the Top investments are used wisely and accordingly through surveys, focus groups, feedbacks from all critical stakeholders. In regard to ensuring that the proposal has continuous improvements over the life of the project, the applicant has presented a detailed plan to use Baldrige system to monitor the progress and for the depth in the plan, the applicant receives 15 out of 15 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)** | 5 | 3 |

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has a viable plan to establish an ongoing commnication plan with all critical stakeholders ensuring that they remain informed of district's efforts to implement the project on both district and school levels. The communication plan includes two-way communication system and broad-based external outreach process across the community. One of the goals of the communication plan is to foster transparency. The plan also includes efforts to engage the community in the implementation of the project through variety of means: creating go-to portals for information, setting up advisory committees to provide support, and provide communication support in different phases of the project.

While the applicant has presented a plan for communicating with the community, there's no "clear and high-quality approach" in terms of engagement. The applicant does include plans to engage the community but they are limited in scope and do not provide details on how the district plan to "foster business/community/college partnerships". Also, the district does not have a plan to engage parents in a systemic way to ensure that the parents continue to provide input in terms of adjustments and revisions during the implementation. For that reason, the applicant receives 3 out of 5 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)** | 5 | 4 |

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal includes rationale for selecting 12 performance measures: using norm-referenced measure (Stanford) to better compare against students' performance on a national level and at the same time, uses STAAR assessment to help evaluate student achievement and knowledge within the curriculum thus creating a broad, balanced snapshot of student performance on both national and local levels. However, using attendance as one of indicators to evaluate students based on age appropriate health and social-emotion is not rational. The applicant's rationale for using attendance is not logical especially considering there may be too many factors affecting attendance other than just health or social-emotion. The proposed performance measures for grades 9-12 is well thought out and presents a broad look at student performance from different aspects such as FAFSA application, CTE courses & Tech-Prep program enrollment & passing Algebra 1.

Overall, the applicant has presented a plan that does have logical measurements except for using attendance as one of indicators. The applicant receives 4 out of 5 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has proposed a plan to evaluate effectiveness of investments but does not mention how they intend to measure use of time and money to better gauge effectiveness of the Race to the Top - District grant. The report does not include any discussion on how they will evaluate modification of school schedules and structures to ensure that they are effective in supporting project goals and/or objectives.

For that reason, the applicant receives 2 out of 5 points.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)** | **10** | **5** |

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The report does not include much details on how the applicant will use funding to implement its project including funding additional positions and purchasing materials to support the project such as technology equipments and softwares. The report does not include any details on whether the project will receive funding other than the Race to the Top - District grant. Overall, the budget as proposed does appear to be reasonable according to project goals and objectives. The chart does not provide any details on what will be one-time expenditure versus ongoing operational costs.

Due to limited depth in the budget, the applicant receives 5 out of 10 points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)** | **10** | **0** |

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

There is not any discussion on this section. For that, the applicant will receive 0 out of 10 points.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)** | **10** | **8** |

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The section on Competitive Preference Priority has provided an in-depth discussion on how the district plans to work with partners to ensure that the project implementation is successful including details on how the applicant plans to collaborate with different community programs like Rice University, Children's Defense Fund, Texas/United Way, to name a few, to ensure that families and students receive necessary support to participate in the project. The applicant has also developed a plan to share data with various community programs to support the project including using data to inform instruction.

However, there are some sections that lack details. For instance, under section on Delivering Key Academic Supports and Workforce Connections, the applicant writes in the report that Exxon, the Texas Medical Center and "other to-be-recruited business partners" will provide externships and internships. One of the criteria requires the applicant to provide descriptions of collaborators and the applicant is unable to at this time.

Considering the depth of information on how community programs will collaborate with the applicant to support the project, it is clear that the applicant has gathered support from various parts of the community even though there are some missing details in regard to which business will partner with the applicant. The depth of the section will result in the applicant receiving 8 out of 10 points.

## Absolute Priority 1

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Absolute Priority 1** | **Met/Not Met** | **Met** |

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Throughout the report, the applicant has presented in great details on how they intend to create a personalized learning environment for all types of students within the project including plans to scale up the project to serve all students in the

district. To support this vision, the applicant has presented a detailed and highly qualified plan to train all types of personnel that will support the implementation of this vision from the district to school levels including providing training to parents and community members to support this implementation.

| Total | 210 | 151 |
|---|---|---|

## Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points) | 15 | 0 |

**Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant did submit a proposal for Optional Budget Supplement but did not meet any of criteria therefore the applicant receives 0 out of 15 points.

# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #0422TX-4 for Houston Independent School District

## A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)** | **10** | **10** |

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(1) The applicant articulated a comprehensive and clear vision for reforming education in the school district. The applicant used relevant and focused research from respectable sources to design the proposed project. The applicant will build on a successful existing reform initiative. The proposed project will expand the HILZ reform project. A wide range of appropriate resources were described. The applicant will use The Texas College and Career Readiness Standards.The Standards are rigorous. The reform vision will deepen student learning because of the rich resources and materials which will be made available to them. There is evidence of the need to have strategies that will increase equity through personalized student support. Technology will be used extensively to enhance and diversify teaching and learning for all student groups and subgroups. This should add to contributing toward closing the achievement gap between student subgroups and other groups.The technology will bring innovation and excitement to the teaching and learning process. The applicant is coherent and convincing in stating that the proposed project will prepare students for increased academic achievement, especially in STEM subjects. Students will receive specific training and education in high demand fields while local industry will obtain a highly skilled workforce, as a result of the proposed project. This is a win-win for students and the community.

This section was scored at the high level, because of the strong vision the applicant articulated for real education reform. There is (i) a reformed evaluation system for teachers, principals and the superintendent. There is (ii) a clear commitment by the state of measuring all student progress and performance against college and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicant described (iii) a strong data system that identifies with a teacher-student match and the ability to produce data in a timely manner, that will be sent to educators (teachers and supervisors) on student progress. There is (iv) the capability to receive student level pre-school through 12th grade and beyond data. All of these core educational assurances are currently in place. The data system is a work in progress and the applicant will continue to add new data, thus strengthening the data system. The applicant has an outstanding foundation already in place to continue to implement an increasingly effective education reform agenda.

| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
| --- | --- | --- |

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(2)  The applicant 's approach to implementing a high quality reform proposal is described in detail.

(a) A description of the process that the applicant used to select schools to participate in the proposed process was sound and meets the eligibility requirements. The process was described and justified.

(b)  A list of the schools were presented in the application. The schools are referred to often throughout the application. The schools include high, middle and elementary schools.

(c) The total number of participating students from low income families were identified through the number of students who receive free and reduced lunches.  Data on free and reduced lunches were clearly described, using a chart and accompanying narrative.

(i)The applicant will implement the proposed project no later than the 2014-2015 school year.-

(A) There is a teacher evaluation system, which is rigorous.

(B) There is a principal evaluation system, which is appropriate.

(C)  There is a superintendent evaluation system, which is descriptive.

(ii) The applicant will prepare all students for college and career by measuring all student progress and performance against college and career-ready graduation requirements. This process will serve as a guide to keep students on track, as they prepare for proficiency that will assist them in attaining there career and college goals.

The applicant's approach to implementation is a high quality plan.  The process for recruiting and supporting school district personnel is a departure from business as usual. These new strategies will strengthen the capabilities of the school district personnel. This will translate into more focused and effective teaching.

This section was scored in the high range because it fully addressed the process of selecting schools and students, who are high risked and from low income families, to participate in the project.

| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
| --- | --- | --- |

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(3)

The applicant presented a high quality plan describing the reform program in detail. The applicant embarked on its Strategic Direction for district reform and improvement in 2010. The Plan includes five core initiatives: effective teachers in every classroom; effective principals in every classroom; rigorous instructional standards and supports data driven accountability and culture of trust through action. The Strategic Direction Plan reflects a strong foundation for reform. The applicant described several promising reform initiatives already in place. One example is the use of formative assessments every four to six weeks. Another example is the commitment to increase parent active involvement. The initiatives already in place will be scaled up to expand more meaningful reform district-wide, by including additional schools in the reform effort. There will also be an increase in the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals. This will enhance the skills and effectiveness of teachers and principals.. There is a plan to raise the academic bar and promote innovation and continuous improvement through increased technology and further personalizing teaching and learning. The applicant has all of the elements in place to conduct high level education reform. Technology will be used to bridge classroom learning with service learning. Students will increase their participation in STEM related projects and problem based activities. Research from credible sources was cited and used in designing the proposed project. The proposed reform plan includes the creative use of technology, sound planning and data that will improve outcomes for all students. The applicant presented a compelling and exciting program of school reform.

This section of the application was scored in the high range because the plan is exceptional. It has ambitious and attainable goals that are supported with technology and sound research.

| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
| --- | --- | --- |

## (A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(4)

The applicant presented a comprehensive plan for district-wide goals for improved student learning and performance. There is documented evidence that the plan will increase equity. This will advance student learning for individual and groups of students. Five goals are listed and are attainable and reasonable. The goals are aligned with realistic and substantive school reform.

(a) The applicant presented performance data on summative assessments, such as the state achievement test, STAAR. These data will be used to measure individual and group academic achievement. This will allow teacher/advisors to assist students to assess their current academic status and design their individualized learning plan, accordingly.

(b)  The applicant will decrease student achievement for all subgroups with special emphasis on those students with special needs and minorities.

(c)   The applicant will increase graduation rates of all students, including the subgroups.

(d)   The applicant will increase college enrollment. The data tracking process of students and their progress will keep teacher/advisors and others current.  Base line data for each participating school were presented and the data for the subsequent years during the project were presented. This was helpful in determining the current status of student learning and where the applicant needs to begin to further support student academic achievement.These data show a vision that will increase academic achievement for all students. It is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and equity as demonstrated in the stated goals and data on the chart presented in the application.The plan is of outstanding quality.This section was scored in the high range because it will likely improve student outcomes.

(e)  The applicant presented a plan for improving student outcomes as indicated on the charts and narrative presented in the application..

The applicant will build on a strong base of research by emphasizing both state and national standards. Technology will be used to enhance individual student learning.

# B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)** | 15 | 15 |

## (B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(1) The applicant demonstrated substantial evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in student learning by:

(a) improving student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps through raising student achievement rates, raising graduation rates for all students and increasing college enrollment rates. School drop out rates are at an all time low in the district. The applicant presented credible data, a strong narrative and information in the appendices that document these successes. There is evidence that the subgroups and other students, showed increased participation, specifically by minorities in taking the SAT, PSAT, and AP exams, from 4,300 to 6,200 students by 2011. The state pays for the exams.This is an important step because many students have not taken these tests before. By taking these tests, students will have pathways opened to them that would have not been possible. For instance by taking the PSAT test, they can determine to what extent they are prepared to tackle the SAT. Many colleges require SAT scores for attending.

(b) improving low performing schools through ambitious and significant reforms through increasing recruiting and placing effective teachers in the low performing schools. These teachers are paid incentive pay to increase academic achievement of struggling students to pass the STAAR (state test). Also the state pays for the tests. The school district is committed to providing an additional $2,042 per child in the target twenty schools.The applicant identified two schools as Tier I schools. Strategies that will be instituted to these targeted schools, include a longer school day, intensive two-to-one tutoring and the use of data to support instruction.

(c) making student performance data available to students and educators through the district web site and school board meetings. The quality and frequency of reporting is transparent and the applicant has demonstrated a willingness to ask for feedback from diverse audiences and use the feedback to make adjustments, if needed. Frequent formative evaluations will be

conducted and fed to teachers for adjusting instruction. Technology, through the newly developed Data Dashboard will be used. The applicant is working to strengthen the commitment of providing even more transparency to the public through a new data warehouse.

The applicant has made impressive strides toward substantive education reform in the last four years. This section was scored in the high range because it described outstanding initiatives and strategies that will likely further school reform.

| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(B)(2)

The applicant has a high level of transparency in place for:

(a) actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff through the budget handbook. The handbook is widely disseminated among stakeholders and others. It is one example of openness and will likely lead to an increased level of trust.

(b) actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers through the budget handbook. This will likely engender more insight and satisfaction by teachers, among their peers about salaries. This could inspire other teachers to aspire to attain higher salary levels. It would also inform any and all interested persons about teacher salaries.

(c) actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level. through the budget handbook. Although personnel costs are typically the highest expenditures, the non-personnel expenditures are important to reveal in the effort to be open and transparent.

There is a budget handbook which lists personnel salaries, instructional staff  and complete relevant information and data on procedures, policies and financial matters. This information is made available on the school district web site. The information will be placed in the public domain for easy access. The school district has been recognized by the State Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts for Transparency. This is an important award, which further documents the applicant's commitment to transparency.

The plan documents a high level of transparency that will inform stakeholders of project personnel salaries and related financial matters. The section was scored in the high range because it described an exceptional plan for transparency.

| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(B)(3)

The applicant has demonstrated solid evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to personalize learning environments described in the application. The applicant has conducted an extensive examination of state law,  regulations and school board policies. Therefore the applicant feels free to continue to provide additional reforms, including virtual school networks, distance learning, correspondence courses and other technology infused education delivery venues, based on strong research. There will be a focus on STEM and literacy across the curriculum. A copy of the grant application was shared with the state and the mayor.

The applicant has provided convincing evidence that the the proposed education reforms are not in violation of State legal requirements. Due diligence has been conducted in this regard.

This section has been scored in the high range because it documents that the applicant has covered all bases in making sure that legal barriers have been cleared for the proposed school reform to move forward.

| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(B)(4)

The applicant presented evidence of how students, families, teachers and principals in participating schools participated in the

development of the application. There was significant and meaningful stakeholder engagement. The applicant conducted an extensive outreach effort to a variety of stakeholders. The applicant informed all participating schools about the project. At least 70% of the teaching staff approved their school participation. PTA groups and site based decision making committees assisted in informing other stakeholders. Feedback from these stakeholders were accepted and incorporated into the application, when possible.

(ii) The state is not a collective bargaining state. The President of the local Federation of Teachers signed the assurances to affirm support for the proposed project. Many of the teachers on each campus voted to show 100% enthusiastic support for the proposed project.

(b) The applicant collected numerous letters of support from many stakeholders. Letters were submitted from principals, teachers, students, parents and others. The Houston Community College and Rice University committed significant resources to the proposed project. Letters of support were received from the NAACP, Raise Your Hand Texas, a US Congressman, a US Congresswoman and many others. Impressive letters of support are included in the application.

The applicant is committed to report to and get feedback from the entities throughout the project, as was done during the preparation of the application.

The applicant has outstanding and diverse support for the proposed project. The support is of high quality and quantity.

This section was scored in the high range because it documented an impressive amount of support from diverse sectors of stakeholders.

| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
| --- | --- | --- |

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

(B)(5)

The applicant conducted a thorough examination of the disparities, gaps and determined need. It is evident that achievement gaps exist in graduation rates, and college enrollment rates of African American students, Hispanic students and students with disabilities, compared to other students. Data were presented to document these disparities. The proposed project will build on current efforts to further address the disparities.The proposed project activities, timeline and responsible parties are described. The time line is attainable, given the resources dedicated to the proposed project.The applicant will create a one-to-one learning environment; increase digital learning options; increase the use of technology (especially in STEM courses); increase curriculum and assessment performance and increase access to data. All of the strategies are driven by data and respected research. The strategies and programs described are likely to improve the academic achievement and graduation rates of the identified subgroups.

The plan is of high quality.This section was scored in the high range because it used a variety of data and showed diverse and creative use of technology in analyzing the current status of implementing personalized learning environments for all students.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
| --- | --- | --- |
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points) | 20 | 20 |

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(C)(1)

(a) With the support of parents and educators all students will be able to-

(i) understand that what they are learning is key to reaching their goals through their own individual learning plan. Digital portfolios, mentors and access to quality assessments are some strategies that will be used. The strategies have been used in other settings and locations with great success. The individual learning plan is an excellent tool, especially for the subgroups.

(ii) identify and develop goals that will place them on a career or college pathway. A plan is presented for every level. Each student will have a personal graduation plan. Students will be able to connect academic achievement to postsecondary goals and receive assistance from teacher/advisors who will support them in reaching their goals. The state has already adopted standards and assessments that prepare students for college and/or the workplace. The school district has developed a set of

standards that supports a more rigorous curriculum. This is advantageous for the students. It will also help the teacher/advisors to manage student individual growth and focus on timely intervention, when needed.

(iii)  become more involved in deep learning experiences of their interest through project based learning, extended content interface 24/7, on-line web and personalized learning programs for parents and students. The possibility of 24/7 learning opportunities and project based learning for students is especially exciting and is transformative for education reform in the school district.

(iv) become involved in diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives, which will enhance their learning. The applicant will capitalize on the diverse student population and the diverse city population. This will provide a point of departure toward understanding the global community. Understanding the global community, student project learning and service learning will be applied to local issues and extend globally. This will place the school district on a competitive basis with other school districts embarking on extensive school reform. Embracing the diversity that already exists in the school district and the surrounding area is progressive thinking. Creative assignments and strategic placement of students into meaningful service learning environments will help students prepare for their future in careers or college. The applicant has demonstrated that they understand how powerful these experiences will be for students.

(v) help students master critical academic content. The applicant will provide extended time at each school; extra reading class at 6th and 9th grade for students falling behind in literacy skills. The applicant will also provide graduation coaches and middle school credit discovery and recovery courses

(c)(i)  provide students with the ability to design and participate in their own individualized learning content and pace 24/7. The applicant has shown the importance of providing opportunities for students to chart their own pace of learning. While this is revolutionary thinking for all students, it is especially promising for nontraditional learners, such as those with learning disabilities or ELL students. Gifted and talented students will benefit from these opportunities, as well.

(c) (ii)  provide varied individualized instructional approaches such as blended learning environments in on-line courses, the chance for students to undertake real life tasks, through project learning. Also there will be an increased number of teacher development specialists.This will change the scope and sequence of instruction and curriculum. Teachers need to be retrained to effectively guide students in individualized learning. Blended learning is the wave of the future. The applicant is well aware of this.

(c)(iii) make available to students high quality content and digital access, especially across STEM disciplines and literacy training. This will be accomplished by  higher order comprehension instruction in reading and writing. There will be integrating literacy into social studies. There will be heavy use of the Khan Academy and other on-line learning possibilities. These strategies were designed and supported by respected research sources. The resources were cited, appropriately. The applicant realizes the importance of and will implement literacy across the curriculum, especially across the STEM disciplines. This is an excellent way to strengthen student reading, writing and thinking skills in subjects that students might not otherwise undertake. STEM disciplines have been declared, by the federal government, a priority in the school curriculum. The applicant's proposed project respects this priority.

(c)(iv) (A)collect data and make that data available to students, parents and teachers. The applicant has incorporated diagnostic formative and summative assessments throughout the curriculum. The formative evaluation will generate a stream of data which will trigger the attention of students, parents and teachers to analyze the results and to act accordingly.

(B) assist students to access computer-based and personalized learning systems including the use of games, songs and simulations and frequent formative assessments and summative evaluations. The applicant will also provide differential instruction and accommodations for high need students. Games, songs and simulations is used far too infrequent in reaching some students. The applicant will integrate these strategies into its personalized learning systems. This is a pioneering effort by the applicant and will help students attain their goals.

 Many tools are available for monitoring the pace of teaching and learning. One is the instruction observation protocol. Teacher/advisors will meet one-on-one with students to support students.The many tools that will be used in monitoring is an excellent way to identify and improve the pace of teaching and learning, for individual students.

(c) The Action Plan for implementing the proposed project is comprehensive and attainable because of the activities, deliverables and the rich support system that will drive the reform effort will use.

The applicant will use technology for delivering innovative instruction. A robust plan is in place at every level of the project to collect data. Data will be analyzed and used to improve student individual and collective outcomes. The Action Plan is outstanding.

The section was scored in the high range because it is a high quality plan with the necessary elements, activities and strategies to make the proposed project successful in attaining project goals.

| (C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points) | 20 | 20 |
| --- | --- | --- |

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(C) (2)

(i) The applicant will provide school based professional learning communities in all of the participating schools. There will be multi-day summer institutes. There will be a personalized, coherent, relevant and challenging curriculum. Teachers will be trained to be more reflective and skillful in interdisciplinary pedagogy. All of these The applicant acknowledges the need for and indeed plans to provide strong teacher support, as they move from traditional teaching to learner driven models. The applicant has proposed a highly effective and supportive learning environment for teachers. The professional learning communities will heighten and enrich peer support in the teaching and learning process..

(ii) The applicant will provide a learning environment that will stress teacher skills in choosing and implementing strategies that support students to engage in individual and common tasks that will meet their individual and collective needs. Technology will be front and center in the process. Teachers will use electronic portfolios, videos, simulations, web-based research and other strategies that will assist students in reaching their goals. The learning environment in the school district will prepare teachers and students to effectively use 21st century technology, which will help students reach their career and college goals.

(iii) The applicant will implement a rigorous set of measurement tools to assess student progress. Students will be provided descriptive feedback on their work, in a timely manner. Other measurements will include the use of observations, conferences, portfolios, project performance tasks, rubrics, homework unit tasks and data books. Students will have their individual plans to serve as a blueprint to reach their goals. This will generate high quality data, on which critical teaching and learning decisions will be made.

(iv) The applicant will implement practices that will improve teacher and administrator competency. The learning community in each school will support this effort.Practices will be buttressed by coaching principals in each school. The teacher and principal evaluation systems will guide this process and provide frequent feedback, intervention and support.The applicant will likely be successful.

(c) (i)   All participating teachers and principals will have the tools, strategies, techniques, skills and materials to help students reach their individual and collective goals through a robust professional development program, training on how to use technology, creatively, in teaching and ready access to cutting edge research . Classroom observations and a timely formative evaluation will ensure that teachers and principals are properly equipped to assist students in preparing for a career or the workplace.The applicant has an evaluation system, supports and expertise to provide the necessary tools, strategies, techniques and monitoring procedures to successfully integrate technology throughout the school district.

(c) (ii) Teachers and principals will be trained in a professional development model especially designed for STEM teachers. Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, a new Teacher Appraisal System has been in place. It is one key factor in upgrading human capital. Teachers will have multiple measures of student learning. There is also an incentive program which recognizes the impact of teachers, campus administrators and others, whose work leads to increased student academic achievement. This is a well designed incentive program and can serve as a guide for other school districts to follow.

(d) The applicant presented a rich plan with clear objectives, strategies and support to successfully implement the proposed project. All of the above are part of a Comprehensive Action Plan. The Comprehensive Action Plan is excellent and will serve as a blueprint for advancing the project forward.

The application was scored in the high range because it is well written and contains many innovative strategies.

# D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)** | 15 | 13 |

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) Practices, policies, procedures are in place in the central office of the school district. These are clearly described in the school district handbook and on the school district web site. Specific roles for for the relevant departments are adequately described. Examples are the Grants Department, the Research and Accountability Department and the Legal Department. The administrative infrastructure is in place to support technology and instruction on career and college readiness.

(b) The applicant recently, has instituted a School Flexibility and Autonomy Plan which has reorganized the school district structure. Now, individual school buildings have autonomy and more flexibility. This change was supported by 70% of the teachers. There is support for school autonomy and for the project. This will help in receiving needed support for the proposed project.

(c) The proposed project will provide opportunities for students to earn credit through on-line digital curricula and web-based courses and other projects. In some courses students will have three attempts to master or answer quiz questions. That is an excellent support for students. Faculty support will be provided to the students. This is exactly what some students need. These opportunities will expand the possibilities for more students to experience success in their course work.

(d) Students will have access to diverse web-courses, games, simulations, quizzes and other learning tools 24/7. This makes learning flexible and in some cases fun, since many students already enjoy games and simulations on the computer.

(e) Students will be able to access authentic assessments, including Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities for Gifted and Talented students, ELL, Language Arts Assessments and pre-kindergarten math assessments. The project target schools will use the Universal Design for Learning. Through this system, focus is on multiple means of representation. Responsible persons are clearly identified. Some examples are personnel from the Departments of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. The applicant is maximizing available resources, which is so important.

The applicant presented a strong narrative and data to support the fact that there is an outstanding infrastructure at the central office and other parts of the school district, in support of the proposed project. The myriad supports are described in detail.

This section was scored in the high range because it contains an outstanding narrative and data about the school district infrastructure already in place. It is substantial and will allow the proposed project to build on existing strengths.

**Weakness**:

(b) The applicant failed to provide sufficient information regarding the extent to which schools were granted more flexibility and autonomy. More information is needed about the extent to which autonomy has been granted.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)** | 10 | 8 |

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The LEA and school infrastructure ensures that students, parents and educators will have necessary access,to content, tools and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant has already established itself as a leader in this regard. These programs and practices will continue and be enhanced. Some examples of existing programs and practices are the Twilight Campuses, Project Share, school and community-based computer labs and Parent Engagement Centers. In addition, the applicant will implement a learning management system, which will strengthen the school district and school infrastructure. This will add considerably to the success of the proposed project..

(b) The applicant will implement a staff development program that will train teachers and staff in the most effective use of technology.This will ensure technology proficiency. Students will also be trained. The applicant will develop on-line tutorials and tech savvy teachers and other instructors will assist students in the use of relevant technology.Students will have a web-based suite documenting student successes. Parents will be trained. These initiatives will ensure appropriate levels of technical support for students, teachers, staff and parents.

(c) The applicant will provide student intervention services, especially through the teacher/advisors. They will use the data from intervention to develop and revise student educational plans. Relevant data and information will be downloaded and shared appropriately. This is an effective use of data that will help students reach their goals.

(d) The applicant will ensure that the school district and target schools will use a data system. Much of the data system is already in place. The system will allow the sharing of a wide range of data, including grades, attendance, demographic and other student data. All of the new categories of data, aforementioned, will be added to individual student files.These data will serve as a foundation for identifying and responding to individual and group needs.

The applicant will use data to drive the frequent assessment process. Categories of new data will be added into the school district data system. The sharing of data is a key part of student and project success.

This section was scored in the high range because of the outstanding student support strategies that the applicant proposed.

**Weakness**

(d) The applicant failed to clearly establish that the applicant has or will have an interoperable data systems. More information is needed.

# E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)** | 15 | 15 |

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(1)

The applicant has a clear and high quality plan to continuously improve the project. Strategies that will be used represent best practices for monitoring, measuring and public sharing of information on the successful progress of the project. The applicant will implement a timely formative evaluation plan. That plan will require frequent and diverse modalities of collecting data and using that data to make necessary changes in project procedures. Embedded in many of the on-line learning opportunities are assessments and feedback. Data from these sources will be used by students to self assess and by teacher/advisors to strengthen instruction. Principals will use the data to measure teacher and student progress. The external evaluator will use data to measure overall .project process. The external evaluator will bring some objectivity to the evaluation and strength the entire evaluation process. The applicant will use the Baldridge Continuous Cycle of Plan, Do, Study, Act to monitor, measure and improve the quality of teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. The Executive Steering Committee will provide another level of monitoring project progress. The Committee will provide expertise, information and resources to the project.
The Executive Committee will build capacity for the proposed project and meet weekly.The applicant will use the school district web site, reports and many meetings with stakeholders to share a variety of project information. These strategies will keep stakeholders informed on project progress and will likely garner increased support for the project. .

This section was scored in the high range because the formative evaluation plan is exceptional and will provide high quality monitoring, measuring and timely project feedback.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)** | 5 | 4 |

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(2)

The applicant articulated many useful strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The Executive Steering Committee, which will meet weekly, will facilitate communication and engagement, internally and externally. The school district web site and regular school board meetings will serve as an effective vehicle of ongoing communication, internally and externally. The feedback to students from the teacher/advisors will contribute to frequent ongoing communication with individual students. The classroom observations and teacher and principal evaluations are other useful strategies that will foster ongoing and meaningful communication to stakeholders. There is some evidence that the applicant will meet with parents, community and business leaders to provide updates on the progress of the project during

the life of the project.

This section was scored in the high range because it has an outstanding plan to communicate frequently and openly to most project stakeholders. The communication pipeline is diverse and will reach key stakeholders.

**Weakness**

The applicant failed to provide a clear high quality, systematic, strategic plan to engage the external stakeholders including those who wrote letters of support for the application.

| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
|---|---|---|

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(3)

(a) The applicant clearly articulated a rationale for selecting performance measures.  Student individual and group data on academic achievement, including end of course tests, state tests, norm-referenced tests and standardized tests, are just some of the measures that will be used. The external evaluator will conduct high quality assessment measures. The most innovative performance measures will include project and performance measures and self paced learning results for web-based courses.

(b) The measures will provide timely, rigorous and formative evaluation information tailored to the proposed project. Extensive data wlll be collected by students, teachers, principals, the external evaluator, personnel in the central office and parents. End of course assessments will be used, appropriately. Other tests and assessments that will be used include attendance records, state tests, PSAT, SAT and other tests, These data will contribute to the success of the proposed project and will assist students in getting the support they need to reach their career and/college goals.

(c) The applicant has a plan to improve the project performance measures if  the current measures are insufficient.to successfully gauge implementation. The formative evaluation plan will identify measures that might be insufficient. The ongoing formative evaluation will provide for timely intervention to correct any problems that would hinder project success.The applicant's plan for the use of project performance measures is rich in data collection and the project is data driven. Data review and feedback will contribute to the ongoing success of the proposed project.

The applicant presented an exceptional number of performance measures. All are appropriate and will likely yield useful data. The rationale for using specific kinds of performance measures are described in detail. They are appropriate.

This section was scored in the high range because of the traditional and new, innovative assessments, which were proposed.

| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(4)

The applicant has a quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed project.. The extensive use of technology, through web-based instruction, and assessment, will likely prove effective and justify the costs.There is some evidence that the external evaluator will produce useful data and information on service delivery, school leadership teams and decision-making structures. The results will allow for timely intervention, if needed.There is an overall evaluation plan which will collect data, on several levels. that will,provide a credible basis to determine the effectiveness of project funding. The applicant indicated that the ASPIRE Awards is used to determine project growth and value added. The applicant places high priority on this program and has funded it at $35.1 million dollars across 12,390 campus-based staff members whose work led to increased student academic and achievement during the 2010-2011 school year. This program is another innovative strategy. It is exceptionally promising and justifies the prior expenditures.

This section was scored in the high range because of the exceptional evaluation plan.

**Weakness**

The applicant failed to sufficiently describe a plan to measure the effectiveness of working with community partners. This element of the proposed plan is integral to school reform. Measurement of effectiveness in this area could point to the possibility of effective replication.

# F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)** | **10** | **8** |

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The budget will cover project activities. described. It will serve as guide to conduct a successful project.

(a) The applicant identified funds that will be needed to support all parts of the proposed project. The school district showed its commitment to the project by investing significant financial resources in the project .

(b) The applicant presented a budget that is reasonable. Budget costs are reflective of current and projected market rates. The budget items are sufficient to contribute to the project success.

(c) The budget provided a thoughtful and reflective approach to developing the proposed project. Budget items were sufficiently justified.

(1) There is a clear description of all of the funds that will be used in the project. This transparency in budget matters will contribute to the integrity of the budget and funding sources.

(ii) The budget that will be used for one-time investments and those that will be used for ongoing operational purposes.This is an example of sound management.

This section was scored in the high range because of the comprehensive budget described in the application.

**Weakness**

The applicant failed to adequately describe the external funding for the project. More information is needed.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)** | **10** | **0** |

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Information was missing. The score is 0 out of 10.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)** | **10** | **9** |

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant assembled an expansive cadre of partners to support the proposed project. The partners will include representation from the private sector, school district, philanthropic community, non-profits, faith-based organizations, health providers, parents, families and others. The data will be used to target and track resources to match specific student needs. The applicant will improve results over time by using the support, technology, skills and assessments which the proposed project will implement. The applicant will assess the needs of students with the needs of partners. Some work has already been done in this area. The higher education partners have indicated their needs and requirements. The business community has indicated their needs in the workplace.

The applicant will assess the needs of the school and community throughout the term of the project. There are many informal and formal assessments that will be used. These are described in great detail. The applicant will strengthen the existing decision-making infrastructure. It is a shared decision-making model that will allow students, parents, school staff, central office personnel and others to buy into the project and gain ownership of the project and its success. The applicant will engage families and students in decision-making and identifying needs through the internal mechanisms.of regular monitoring, assessments, evaluations, meetings, conferences and other electronic contacts The applicant will routinely and regularly assess every aspect of the proposed project. A plethora of assessment instruments were described and are appropriate. Project challenges and issues will be identified quickly. Interventions will be made in a timely manner. Responsible persons are clearly identified.

The external evaluator will provide ongoing formative and summative evaluations, which will be shared with the appropriate entities.

The applicant qualifies for this Competitive Preference Priority, because of the high quality of the project design. There are many strategies and assessments which are highly innovative. The application is well written and well documented. Maximum use of cutting edge research and diverse use of technology will be used in the project. For these reasons and more. this application was scored in the high range.

**Weakness**

(c) The applicant failed to sufficiently address how the project will scale the project tor each student not covered in the application. More details are needed.

## Absolute Priority 1

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Absolute Priority 1** | Met/Not Met | Met |

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant met Absolute Priority !. The applicant will develop a supportive personalized learning community. Staff and resources are already in place to improve staff development for teachers and other school-based personnel. The rich and innovative strategies and tools that will be available to students, in different modalities 24/7, will increase the possibilities of the target students to reach their individual and common goals.These new, innovative approaches to teaching and learning holds great promise for closing the achievement gaps for subgroups. It will likely increase graduation rates across student groups. and increase rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and/or careers.  The applicant documented outstanding support and cooperation for the proposed project.The applicant has implemented a teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation system; measurements for all student progress and performance against college and career-ready graduation and a comprehensive evaluation system. These will strengthen the project.

This section was scored as met because of the excellent way in which the application is written; the extensive research used to develop the application; the creative use of technology and the myriad aspects of computer based teaching and learning.

| Total | 210 | 191 |
|---|---|---|